

Will the real dopesters be brought to justice?

by Kathleen Klenetsky and Steve Komm

The Bush administration may soon surpass the Carter administration as the most drug-tainted government in U.S. history. That is the direction in which the cocaine scandal surrounding U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh is moving.

EIR has previously reported that two top former aides to Thornburgh, Henry Barr and Richard Guida, are targets of a grand jury probe into illicit cocaine use in Pennsylvania, and that a current key Thornburgh assistant, Richard Weatherbee, may also soon be implicated. In fact, Guida, the number-two man in the Pennsylvania State Attorney General's office under then-Governor Thornburgh, had already pleaded guilty in March to one count of cocaine use, although he did so in order to avoid a more serious indictment for cocaine distribution. That plea bargain was nullified by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gordon Zubrod in July, on the grounds that Guida had failed to live up to his agreement to reveal everything he knows about cocaine use by current and former Pennsylvania state officials.

According to court papers, one of those key former state officials is Henry Barr, who has served under Thornburgh in various capacities, most recently as his special assistant in charge of all Justice Department criminal investigations, including drug probes. As a result of growing outrage over the coverup that has been put in place to protect Thornburgh's pals, Barr himself may soon be indicted on drug-related charges.

The latest development in the Thornburgh drug ring came July 30, when Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) submitted a formal request that the federal government name a special prosecutor to investigate the allegations against Barr.

Thornburgh's double standard

The way in which the investigation of Thornburgh's former lieutenants has been carried out so far stands in sharp

contrast to another celebrated drug trial, that of Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry.

The fact that the Justice Department has lavished millions of taxpayers' dollars and countless man-hours on its years-long pursuit of Barry and his associates, at the same time that Thornburgh's aides have received super-special handling, has not gone unnoticed in Washington, where a number of spokesmen for the black community have angrily pointed to the gross hypocrisy.

And it's not just black Democrats who are furious about the blatant discrepancies between the handling of the Guida-Barr case and that of Mayor Barry. Don Bailey, the former auditor general of Pennsylvania, fired off a letter to Senator Specter July 17 on the Guida-Barr travesty. The government can "spend a few million dollars to expose Marion Barry (who has nothing to do with law enforcement)," wrote Bailey, "but Pennsylvania's top criminal law enforcement officer [Guida] can plead to a misdemeanor possession of cocaine charge. How can you explain such irrational, unbalanced, distorted use of our law enforcement machinery? How can you explain such injustices?"

EIR has obtained a copy of Bailey's letter, which is believed to have spurred Specter's call for a special prosecutor. It reflects the frustration felt by many in Thornburgh's home state over the agonizingly slow pace of the federal probe and the continuing coverup.

Bailey's main point is that an independent prosecutor must be appointed immediately to take over the investigation into Thornburgh's former aides. He writes that a special prosecutor is needed because "those conducting the investigation here [the state capital Harrisburg] cannot possibly be free of either complicity or personal considerations, no matter how good the intentions of some may be. . . ."

"How was Richard Guida able to avoid investigation and

prosecution for so long,” asks Bailey, “while so many others received intensive pressure and relentless pursuit, like Budd Dwyer?” (Bailey is referring to Budd Dwyer, former treasury secretary of Pennsylvania, who committed suicide after being framed up by Thornburgh’s friends.)

“The answer is simple,” Bailey rhetorically replies. “Richard Thornburgh owns the essential elements of the criminal justice system in Pennsylvania. If you have the right friends—whether it’s HUD corruption, drug dealing and usage, PennDot contracting, or doing a friend a favor—decisions affecting investigations or prosecutions in Pennsylvania seem to be made for personal and/or political reasons. Whatever is happening here is a travesty—it’s indecent and it’s wrong. There are just too many examples of abuse.”

Bailey is especially angry about the way federal prosecutors and the FBI have handled the Guida drug case, especially the deal that authorities made with him, under which he was allowed to plead guilty to a misdemeanor count of cocaine possession, instead of standing trial on felony drug trafficking charges.

“The FBI is more intent on assuring us of how limited Guida’s activities were than on really investigating this thing in depth,” charges Bailey. “This whole process is a mockery of decency. . . . As I have been told, this whole thing will be made to appear as a minor yuppie, casual, cocaine ring—nothing more.”

Thornburgh’s son a druggie?

But the real shocker in Bailey’s letter is the allegations he presents that Thornburgh’s own son, Bill, may also have been involved in drugs.

“Even more disturbing matters have surfaced à la Richard Thornburgh,” writes Bailey. He reports that two people have come forward to say that they had “done cocaine” with Bill Thornburgh.

“They claim to have partied with Bill at the ‘mansion’ (meaning the Governor’s mansion) during Mr. Thornburgh’s term,” writes Bailey. “During Christmas of 1988, young Bill Thornburgh came to Harrisburg on leave from the Navy” and an individual who claims to have used drugs with Bill “came into possession of his [Bill Thornburgh’s] driver’s license during a cocaine party. He referred to it as his ‘trump card’ in case of trouble.

“What is particularly obnoxious about all of this is the open and notorious way it was bandied about—with no fear of consequences,” Bailey continues. “Most disturbing of all are some indications that as early as 1982, state authorities were aware of ‘heavy marijuana use by Bill Thornburgh,’ but nothing was ever done about that either. If you have the right friends in Pennsylvania,” comments Bailey, “you have nothing to fear; if you have the wrong enemies, you will be hounded to death—literally.”

The Bailey letter was reported in the Mexican newspaper *Unomasuno* by journalist Rodolfo Medina. Medina, in the

magazine *7 Cambio*, wrote that Thornburgh’s critics accuse him of having “installed a system of administrative fascism.” Thornburgh is angry at Mexico in the war on drugs “because he doesn’t understand that a country, other than the U.S., can demand respect for its laws, and of International Law.” “Perhaps,” he wrote, “he is accustomed to dealing with unredeemable drug addicts . . . and believes that government-to-government relations should be conducted in the same tone.”

Stonewalling on prosecutor

So far, the Bush administration is stonewalling on Senator Specter’s request for an independent prosecutor. The Justice Department said July 31 that it was “unlikely” that Thornburgh would appoint one. But that arrogant response could backfire, because it fuels the belief that Thornburgh is using his influence to protect his friends.

The administration’s hand may be forced by the increasing exposure the Barr-Guida scandal is garnering. As one Washington observer put it, “Do you think Bush can afford to have an AG whose key people have allegedly been snorting coke for years?” Bush “tried to make such a big deal about his War on Drugs, and that’s turned out to be a big flop. What’s going to happen when it comes out that a guy whose job it is to prosecute drug-runners has been surrounded by a bunch of dopeheads? They’re trying to paint Barry as a dope fiend, but the real dope fiends are tied to the DoJ!”

On July 31, the day after Specter’s request, the *Washington Post* ran a lead editorial on the Guida-Barr situation. Provocatively headlined “Drug Users in High Places,” the editorial stated that “The special position of these alleged drug users makes it not only reasonable but imperative that investigations, and if necessary, prosecutions, go forward. . . . If these two men were cocaine users while at the same time being charged with prosecuting traffickers, they will have been guilty of a terrible betrayal of public trust and private duty. And if this is the case, it will be urgent to look into the possibility of corruption, blackmail, and the subversion of investigations during their tenure.”

The editorial questioned whether Barr was “using drugs while he held his Justice Department position,” and implicitly ridiculed Thornburgh’s contention that he knew nothing of any cocaine use among his most trusted people.

The Thornburgh drug-ring scandal is exploding just as the jury in the Barry trial was about to begin its deliberations as *EIR* went to press. Mayor Barry, who has recently lashed out against the “satanic” tactics used by the prosecution and labeled the Justice Department’s witchhunt against him the “\$50 million folly,” is trying to preempt the race-riot scenario which some fear may be unleashed if he is convicted. The Mayor told reporters July 30 that there is absolutely to truth to the press gossip that race riots are in the works. “You obviously don’t realize that we [the black community] have grown as a people the last 20 years. We will not destroy that which we have worked so hard to build up.”